

Buddha Jayanti 2550

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Our Children and Our Youth Under whose Care and Guidance are they made to grow?

[A bit of serious thinking for whoever is planning the Buddha Jayanti Year]

Professor Dhammavihari Thera

In an age of unmarried mothers and fatherless homes, of test-tube babies and surrogate mothers, I often ask myself the question whether it makes any sense for me to choose to write on subjects like what I have indicated above. I of course write as a Buddhist, with a sense to guide and direct with a humanely cultural alignment. The cultural milieu in which Buddhist thinking had its genesis, was admittedly multi-faceted. Indian educational set-ups of *guru-kula* like those of Taxila, whether pre-Buddhist or post-Buddhist, have left their indelible impress on the totality of human culture in India.

How few in this part of the Buddhist world, monk or layman, including the *Nayakas* of all grades, know the real cultural worth of early Buddhist monastic institutions like *ācariya* and *upajjhāya* and the comparative worth, at global level, of concepts like *in loco parentis*, the equal of which in the Buddhist Vinaya

tradition is *putta-cittaṃ upaṭṭhapetvā* and *pītu-cittaṃ upaṭṭhapetvā*. Are these, together with positive identities of mother and father, uncles and aunts, vibrantly alive anywhere in our midst? Our society today is too full of empty bottles on the racks and broken test-tubes thrown away in the garbage bins.

What really come to our mind when we speak today about children? The belief may still be entertained today, at least in limited circles, that children are dispatched here from elsewhere and as much called back when circumstances necessitate. The Buddhist position on this which is hundred percent biologically supported clearly maintain the parental origin of children. The total involvement of both parents is clearly expressed in the phrase *mātā-pettika-saṃbhava* or *mav-piyangen bihivana*. The reality of this physical contribution of the parents, i.e. of the sperm and the ova, unless unethically distorted and perverted through concepts like cloning or non-embryonic cells, necessarily generates a feeling of loyalty and a sense of belonging to parents. Children are invariably the product of the very living process of parents. It is lamentably breaking down on both sides, of parents and children.

But the world today knows of dreadfully painful concepts like 'unwanted children', and the more horrendous crime of their elimination through abortion. In the *Dharma-dvīpa* of Sri Lanka, teenage boys and girls of school-going age know more of these, and the need for these, perhaps much more intimately than elsewhere. To get down to basics of human behaviour, unwanted pregnancies are no more than blunders of irresponsible gamblers, whether with the metropolitan elite or the less elite in the country.

In Sri Lanka today, it is not uncommon to discover motorists, including even drivers of double-decker buses, recklessly getting off the road, running on pavements where pedestrians go and pinning them to death. But laws of the land are so ingeniously worded and much more skilfully interpreted to prevent anybody ever being prosecuted for any crime. This is the order of the day in our

land.

As far as motorists are concerned, their recklessness often being traced back to drunkenness, beathalyzer tests are now being globally enforced all over the world to reduce such calamities to a minimum. No human rights, i.e. a right to drink anything anywhere, is never invoked by men who have a head above their shoulders. This means bringing into the lives of humans at least a reasonable amount of what we would choose to call discipline, i.e. control over their behaviour. In order to achieve harmony in the human community, discipline both of body and mind is absolutely vital.

It is this spirit of disciplining the human in terms of his thought, word and deed, in order to fit him harmoniously into life of the human community, both for the happiness of man in his present life in the world and for the success of a life beyond this, which underlies the Buddhist culture of *sīla* and *sikkhā*. These cover a very wide range of human life like moral goodness of each individual, man and woman, inter-personal relations within the human community, peaceful co-existence of diverse human groups segmented on the basis of religious and ethnic differences.

The first of these to be seriously taken note of is the Buddhist insistence for respect of all life forms in the universe, without any discrimination between human and animal: *skhino vā khemino hontu sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā* at Sn. v. 145. We are glad to note that today some of the world religions are turning in this direction, in spite of religious sanctions which they have enjoyed up to date, to use animals for their food. They go even further to ban completely the use of animal products like leather, furs etc.

The world wide respect for people's ownership to their legitimately acquired property, now coming under Human Rights, was initiated by the Indians, Jains and Buddhists, more than twenty-five centuries ago. It is to be seriously reckoned with that these attitudes emerged more out of magnanimous considerations from

among our selves for the good of our own fellow humans than from divine injunctions from above.

This down-to-earth attitude of humans towards humans and their immediate environment clarifies the Buddhist insistence on starting all ethical regeneration from one's own home. Their elevation of one's mother and father, out of whom one is born and under whose care and concern one lives, to the position of the believed-in-position of a Father in Heaven as *Brahmā'ti mātā-pītarō* [at AN. I.70] has to be looked upon as a perfectly sound basis for realistic human ethics. Parents are correctly viewed as those who beget us [*āpādakā*] and as those who introduce us to the world or introduce the world to us [*imassa lokassa dassetāro*].

These basic words are adequate for us to know the correct relationship that should exist between parents and children. Another chapter on child care and growth of love called *satara saṅgraha-vastu* [*cattāri saṅgaha-vatthūni* at AN.II.32] comprehensively deals with four areas of parent-child relationships. These four areas are 1. *dāna* or provision by parents to children of basic needs of food and clothing, 2. *peyya-vajja* or endearing forms of address, 3. *attha-cariyā* or counselling / life guidance and 4. *samānattatā* or emotional mobility of parents in situations of grief or joy of their children. With convincing emphasis the Pali text says that these serve like the axel-pin of a moving chariot which secures the wheel in position: *Ete ca saṅgahā loke rathass'āṇīva yāyāto* [loc. cit.].

Thus we see the culture of a young child growing out of the affection and care shown to them lovingly and continuously by their parents. It is a responsive process of interaction. But in a ruinously over-modernised permissive society like Sri Lanka where teenage boys and girls have to see all the time their separated parents marrying again and again, there could never exist love and care which is vitally needed for the healthy growth of children. Juvenile delinquency, we see day after day, comes in the wake of such shattered homes.

The success or failure of a religion is to be measured not in the intensity of

external glamour the patronising groups impose on it, via pompous parades and posters and wildly noisy media, but by the impact a religion is silently making on the lives of the people who adhere to it. All religions in this country have to agree that a great deal of strip-tease is constantly taking place in Sri Lanka as far as religiousness in the lives of people, of men and women of all ages is concerned.

How efficiently are the homes in this country contributing to the cause of rearing children? Are the more up-graded educational institutions any better? The State and the welfare of the people therein are obviously polarised and are moving in opposite directions.



Celebrate Buddha Jayanti 2550

Having restored 24 hour Aṭa-sil in Sri Lanka

Professor Dhammavhari Thera

This is an appeal to all members of the Mahāsaṅgha of all nikāyas in Sri Lanka and to the men and women of the Buddhist lay community.

Buddhists in Sri Lanka, and even in the world outside, are presently stirred up into celebrating the 2550th Buddha Day. *Sādhu Sādhu Sādhu*. Enlightenment or Buddhaness which our Buddha Śākyamuni Gotama attained at the age of thirty-five, more than two and a half millennia ago, is what we should rightly call *bodhi* or wisdom which is invariably needed for every *Samṣāric* being to liberate himself from the ills of the painful continuance of the life process. This has to be understood, without ambiguity, as the one and only goal of our religious aspirations in Buddhism. *Bodhi-pūjā*, it must be pointed out, has very little to do

with the enlightenment process in Buddhism, and consequently very little with honoring the Enlightened One himself.

Every follower of the creed, each one by himself, has to end up the process of his *saṃsāric* journeying in reaching this target which is referred to as Nirvana. There is no such thing as **jumping out of a saṃsāric circle** or *bhava-cakra* to reach Nirvana, as young experts, both monks and laymen, are indoctrinating today large numbers of our academically inclined degree-seeking sophisticated men and women. There is no jumping out of *Saṃsāra*. It is no more than self-operated termination of the continuance of the *saṃsāric* process, i.e. no more rolling on of the wheel of life: *yattha vaṭṭaṃ na vaṭṭati*. Such triumphant individuals therefore come to be called thereafter *nibbutā*, and consequently the state reached is called *nibbuti* as in the well known quote *laddhā mudhā nibbutiṃ bhuñjamānā*.

This final stage implies that the *Saṃsāric* being rolls on no more in the life process of being born and dying: *yattha vaṭṭaṃ na vaṭṭati*. And hence being plunged in Saṃsāric misery or *vaṭṭa dukkha*. In being a Buddhist, this is the most vital issue to be known and handled with diligence, both by those who deliver the message of Buddhism to others and by those who receive it from the amazingly large numbers of those who are placed in positions of delivery. Unfortunately, Sri Lanka has not yet set up a bureau of standards in this area.

But elsewhere, thanks to the advancement in the field of medical science, even the delivery of babies today is no more than child's play. But forget not that even the culture of test-tube babies has its own history and its limitations. With the *dhamma* too, the fundamental question all the time has to be 'Who delivers what in the name of the *dhamma* in Sri Lanka today?'

Now with this revivalist, but still a rude, awakening in the year 2006 for the celebration of yet another Buddha Jayanti, as a prop for an enfeebled and tottering culture [if correctly assessed?], it may be worthwhile for Buddhist gray-

beards and even shaven-headed seniors in the Sāsana to seriously consider whether the house is in order within the Sāsana, both with regard to our knowledge of the basic teachings of the Buddha and their practice in the lives of the adherents, both monks and laymen.

As is best known to us, the religious and spiritual culture of Buddhism, leading up to the unalterable goal in Nirvana, is unquestionably gradual and graduated. One does not gain one's enlightenment through a leap-frog method of mechanically sitting down to meditate: *Nā'haṃ bhikkhave ādiken'eva aññārādhanaṃ vadāmi* [MN.I.479]. This is more than adequately supported through words like *anupubba sikkhā* [= gradual culture], *anupubba-kiriyā* [= gradual training], *anupubba-paṭipadā* [= gradual journeying] in the Kīṭāgiri Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya [loc. cit.]. This culture also proceeds in gradual stages, through a three-tiered process called *tisso sikkhā*. The stages are sequential, one following from the former and leading up to the latter.

Just one look at these stages, to avoid any precipitous leaps in the dark. One is expected to commence this religious culture in earnest, with an adequate grounding in moral goodness [*sīle paṭiṭṭhāya*]. This basic external discipline of word and deed prepares the human individual to fit himself harmoniously into the world in which he has to live, without getting into serious conflict or being contaminated through his erratic thinking in relation to the world, i.e. of grasping through *lobha* or *kāma* and equally well rejecting through *dosa*. Words like *vitakketi* and *papañceti* are used to refer to these erratic processes.

We believe that this being watchful about our relations with the external world and our acquisition of *sīla*-culture are reciprocally connected. This in turn, is said to prepare the Buddhist disciple to handle his initial mind culture to put him in focus for the understanding of the true nature of life, i.e. *yathā-bhūta-pajānana* which necessarily converges on the acquisition of wisdom or *paññā*.

This culture of moral goodness or harmonious inter-personal relationships is

the basic motivation for the *sīla*-culture of Buddhism. Do people in Sri Lanka, from the very top to the very bottom, know why they habitually take *pañca-sīla* or *pansil*? If the givers know fully well what they give under *pañca-sīla*, they cannot be so unconcerned about their non-observance by the takers. Prior to this competitively rushed Buddha Jayanti celebrations, it would rejuvenate the present dilapidated structure of the major religion of the land, if the authorities check with both monks and laymen, even of the highest rank, how they interpret the injunctions 1, 3 and 5 of the *pañca-sīla*.

Occupying the very first place in the well known *pañca-sīla* listing, is *pāṇātipātā veramaṇī* or abstinence from destruction of life, from human down to animal. It is the unrestricted respect and love for all living things, because of the logic, repeatedly indicated in Buddhist teachings that all love their lives and do not wish to be destroyed and deprived of it.

*Sabbe tasanti daṇḍassa sabbe bhāyanti maccuno
attānaṃ upamaṃ katvā na haneyya na ghātaye.*

Dhp. v.129

He who loves his own life cannot destroy the life another. This is in the well known dictum delivered by the Buddha to King Pasenadi Kosala. Nobody knows of another, in any part of the world, who is dearer than oneself.

*Sabbā disā anuparigamma cetasā
nevajjaghāṇā piyataraṃ attanā kvaci.
Evaṃ piyo puthu attā paresaṃ
tasmā na hiṃse paraṃ attakāmo.*

SN.I.75

Remember this respect for life is not necessarily tied up with the animal food one eats. It goes much farther and beyond. Man's need for food like fish and

meat, and wearing apparel like animal skins in leather and furs leads to destruction of living creatures of diverse sorts. It is also to be remembered whether you do the killing in a barbaric or more elegant way, or have it done by another, or even assume that you have nothing to do with it, the crime is one and the same. The Dhammika Sutta of the Suttanipata makes no secret of it for anybody's sake. The injunctions are firm and clear, even to the modern media preachers who often choose to put their glasses on the blind eye. Here is the Dhammika Sutta of the Suttanipata.

*Pāṇaṃ na hane na ghātayeyya
na c'ānujaññā hanataṃ paresaṃ.
Sabbesu bhūtesu nidhāya daṇḍaṃ
ye thāvarā ye ca tasanti loke.*

Sn. v. 396

As for the sikkhāpada No.3 of of *pañca-sīla*, i.e. *kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī*, everybody in Sri Lanka, both monks and laymen, elite and less elite, pious and less pious, all seem to like it diluted to mean sensual pleasures. Not sexual improprieties. It matters very little to the Buddha or the Dhamma. Carry on as you are used to.

As for the 5th precept of *sureraya-majja-pamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī*, all civilized countries in the world have made a start for its implementation with their Breathalyser testing of testing drunken motorists. Let the wiser Sri Lankans drink their red and white wines up to their own standardized limits, their own *mada pamaṇaṭa*. Their medical experts will stand by their comments. But the Police must indeed prosecute.

One last comment, at a time when we believe, it looks most opportune to make it. We make no apologies. Do Sri Lankan monks and the lay community know the difference between the *pan-sil* and *aṭa-sil* which are in free circulation in

the country. A few decades ago, Sri Lankan monks cried even from roof-tops, pleading for the establishment of a *pansil* observing society in the land [*pansil rakina samājayakā*]. We doubt whether anybody knew its implications. Even today, think of the diversity of opinion with regard to the interpretation of these five basic injunctions, specially nos. 1, 3 and 5, as we have already indicated above. Monks do approve and the elegant elite of the land take,, without batting an eye lid, even adulterous vulgarity within the sanctity of married life, with such self-deluding phrases like consensual consent. You know who sponsors these ideas and where?

These are menacing our society like a plague. Do our self-appointed *dhamma*-custodians not even know what is in our own *dhamma* such as *sahasā sampiyena vā*? We are quite sure, and that with adequate evidence, that every body in all ranks are willing to gleefully continue like this, with the comforting belief that all these in life will end in death. Has the state, headed by Buddhists or non-Buddhists, a role to play in arresting this ceaseless decadence that is taking place?

Pansil and *aṭa-sil* in the life of a Buddhist are like gear changes in a motor car. Higher the gear, like the 4th or the 5th, one enjoys a higher cruising speed. But pulling power, up hill or down hill, is less. In a motor car, descend to a lower gear, and while the cruising speed lessens, the pulling power increases. In the same way, in Buddhist *sīla* practice, the higher we go from *pansil* to *aṭasil*, one's spiritual power increases and proportionately, one also gets nearer to one's goal of Nirvana. The additional precepts 6, 7 and 8, together with the revised 3rd precept one advances much farther in one's religious culture. People in this country, together with their religious clergy, know what *aṭa-sil* means. They have been derailed. No matter who is to be blamed. Let us feel the need to correct ourselves.

